

# Hutchinsonianism in Eighteenth-Century Scotland

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The story is dramatic. In late 1739, or early 1740, John Skinner, a parish schoolmaster at Monymusk in Aberdeenshire, attended prayer at the Episcopal chapel over the river at Blairdaff. He was swept off his feet, resigned his post, went to the bishop who re-baptised him, and by way of Orkney and Ellon found his way into the Episcopal ministry, serving at Longside, near Peterhead, from 1742 until 1807. He became the patriarch of his church, training most of its clergy, while his son became bishop as did his grandson. As a poet he was famed for the words he wrote to the Reel of Tullochgorum, "Let Whig and Tory all agree, To spend the night with mirth and glee, And cheerful sing along with me, The Reel of Tullochgorum."<sup>1</sup> The words are scarcely deathless, but we are told that his Latin poetry was better.

What is unclear about all this is the attraction of the Episcopal church. It is said that he only went because he was courting a young lady who expected this of him, but when swept off his feet it cannot have been by her for, unromantically, she is not heard of again.<sup>2</sup> Another version has it that he had already had long talks with the Episcopal minister whom he met in the library of Monymusk House.<sup>3</sup> The Episcopalians, of course, were overwhelmingly Jacobite, but this meant nothing to Skinner, who was to be mildly disciplined by his bishop for qualifying by an oath to the Hanoverian succession in 1747. He may have been attracted by the English Prayer Book, of which copies had been presented to the Blairdaff chapel by Lady Grant, who was English, but it is uncertain how often they were used. If Skinner wanted the Prayer Book he was not to get it, for in those years it was only slowly making its way in a minority of chapels, apparently not including his own at Longside during most of his lifetime.<sup>4</sup> More probably he was attracted to something mystical or sacramental which was not to be found in the Church of Scotland of that era.

In time, Skinner became something of a cuckoo in the nest, moving the Episcopal church away from the Stuart cause and allying it with the Church of England. In this work he was joined by Alexander Jolly, Episcopal minister at Fraserburgh and bishop

<sup>1</sup> W. Walker, *The Life and Times of the Rev. John Skinner, M. A., of Linshart, Longside, Dean of Aberdeen* (London, (1883).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>3</sup> J. Skinner, *Theological Works* (Aberdeen, 1809), i, v.

<sup>4</sup> Walker, *Skinner*, 115.

of Moray, who was always strong on the divinity of the Church of England and trained those clergy whom Skinner did not. But the difference between the two men was that Jolly was always a non-Hutchinsonian, the only one of the northern Episcopal clergy who was not,<sup>5</sup> though his library contained almost all the significant Hutchinsonian volumes of his day.<sup>6</sup> Skinner, on the other hand, was not only an ardent Hutchinsonian but probably the first disciple in the Episcopal church.

He became such in 1753 while imprisoned at Aberdeen. Although not a Jacobite, he was in breach of the law by taking services for more than five persons, and charges had been laid. His nine-year-old boy was imprisoned with him as an act of kindness; the lad was worried about his father and would not be parted from him. Although already competent in Hebrew, he used his time in prison to read as never before or again, and almost certainly he read the works of John Hutchinson. He certainly planned his work on the Christian, as against the Jewish, significance of the "Shechinah" during this period,<sup>7</sup> but it was a time when Hutchinsonian writings were more popular than they were ever to be again. Originally published from 1727 onwards, they had been re-published from 1748, and in 1753 an abstract of all the Hutchinsonian books appeared at Edinburgh,<sup>8</sup> while other works appeared in support of the doctrine at London, Edinburgh, and Dublin. The reason for this sudden popularity lay in an act of the Union parliament allowing Jews to be naturalised in Britain, a small thing in itself, but "Certain of the clergy warned their flocks to beware of the sin of national apostacy",<sup>9</sup> and there was such intense panic that the act was repealed later in 1753. In his prison cell at Aberdeen, John Skinner expected an influx of Jews to Britain on such a scale that the Jewish use of the Old Testament must be studied and refuted, and for this purpose the works of Hutchinson appeared to be ideal.<sup>10</sup> In fact, the act of 1753 was based upon the famous re-admission of Jews to England under Cromwell in 1655, when many of the ideas of Hebrew as the original language of Paradise were current,<sup>11</sup> and the whole

5 W. Walker, *The Life of the Right Reverend Alexander Jolly. D.D., Bishop of Moray* (Edinburgh, 1878), 50, 72.

6 National Library of Scotland, Catalogue of the Jolly Collection, showing all works by Hutchinson and volumes by Bate, Catcott, Forbes, Holloway, Horne, Pike, and Spearman.

7 Skinner, *Works*, ii, 2.

8 J. Hutchinson, *An Abstract from the Works of John Hutchinson, Esq., being a Summary of his Discoveries in Philosophy and Divinity* (Edinburgh, 1753).

9 W. M. Torrens, *History of Cabinets* (London, 1894), ii, 165.

10 Skinner, *Works*, ii, 2.

11 D. S. Katz, *Philo-Semitism and the Readmission of the Jews to England 1603-1655* (Oxford, 1982), 44-50, 66, 75.

Hutchinsonian turmoil of doctrines is more typical of the seventeenth than of the eighteenth century.

John Hutchinson was born in Yorkshire in 1674 and educated to be an estate manager. It was about 1700, while in the service of the Duke of Somerset, that he met the ducal physician, Dr Woodward, who set him collecting fossils to prove that there had been a deluge. Hutchinson claimed that Woodward claimed that he was writing a book to prove the Old Testament by fossils, but Hutchinson discovered all the pages were blank and tried to retrieve his fossils. The matter was still at law when Woodward died, and the fossils went to Cambridge where they still are. In fact, John Woodward wrote a good deal, including a *Natural History of the Earth* published in 1695 before Hutchinson knew him, in which many Hutchinsonian ideas may be found in embryonic form. He held that "the whole Terrestrial Globe was taken all to pieces and dissolved at the Deluge", so that fossils and shells are now found all over the place, after "all that Mass that was thus borne up in the Water, was again precipitated and subsided towards the bottom".<sup>12</sup> Woodward insisted that the Deluge was necessary to roughen up a world "contrived for a state of innocence",<sup>13</sup> and he went into great details about fluids, by which he meant water everywhere, though the Hutchinsonians applied this thinking to cosmic radiation. Woodward was also opposed to Newton and gravity, holding that gravity was not due to "contingent, precarious, and inconstant causes",<sup>14</sup> but to the will of God, if God "be yet at the helm".<sup>15</sup> It is ironic that Woodward's bones should have been laid by those of Newton in Westminster Abbey, but while Hutchinson may be considered a credulous pedant, Woodward seems to have been a reasonable man on the wrong track, even if he became so embroiled in medical polemics that he had to defend his views with his sword.<sup>16</sup>

Yet, in due course, Hutchinson set himself to write the book which he said Woodward did not. The Duke provided him with a sinecure and provided his disciple, the curate Julius Bate, with a living. From 1727 until 1732, 12 volumes were produced, *Moses' Principia*, *Natural History of the Bible*, *Moses' Sine Principia*, *Confusion of Tongues*, *Power Essential*, *Glory or Gravity*, and other such titles. More usefully, Hutchinson also invented a new kind of clock, which must have had something in its favour since the London horologists were up in arms against it. He died in 1737, from riding a fractious horse.

Hutchinson's books are virtually unreadable today. He was

12 J. Woodward, *Natural History of the Earth* (London, 1695), preface, 75.

13 *Ibid.*, 84.

14 *Ibid.*, 59.

15 *Ibid.*, 61.

16 *D.N.B.* John Woodward.



essentially one of those seventeenth-century English writers who burst forth with wild theories derived from a secret code of knowledge, and the result is much like Culpeper's *Herbal* or the works of early Freemasonry. Even his contemporaries found it hard going. Paragraphs of Latin are interposed with paragraphs of English, not much easier than the Latin, while nuggets of Hebrew crop up from time to time. Yet it must be said that there are stretches which do breathe a devotional spirit, especially when he writes of the sacraments. It is just possible to see in Hutchinson the core of that sober faith which moved his Scottish devotees long after they had abandoned the game of theological scrabble with which Hutchinsonianism began.

Yet to understand Hutchinsonianism it is better to abandon the great man's writings and to read those of Duncan Forbes of Culloden, Lord President of the Court of Session. Forbes was Hutchinson's most prominent follower and one of a group of Church of Scotland Hutchinsonians earlier than, and utterly removed from, the poor Episcopalians of the north-east. Most were gentry, some were ministers, none but Forbes made any impression on public life. Of the ministers, only John Trotter of Ceres has been named, and it may be that the others had no contact with one another. One may imagine them as isolated as that English Hutchinsonian mentioned by Archbishop Tait who despaired of interesting family or friends in the doctrine, and was reduced to teaching Hebrew to his coachman, that he might have one fellow-spirit within reach.<sup>17</sup> As for Forbes, he received Hutchinson's books from his bookseller, read them, shut himself up through a vacation in a retired place west of Inverness to learn Hebrew, and eventually read the Hebrew Bible eight times over. His best work was *Thoughts on Religion*, published in 1736, and beginning, "It is impossible to view the immensity, the variety, the harmony, and the beauty of the universe, without concluding it to be the workmanship of a Being infinitely powerful, wise, and good."<sup>18</sup> This is solid eighteenth-century thinking, but Forbes soon strikes out and lists a whole series of things which are *not* deducible from nature. Against mere natural religion he stresses revealed religion, particularly the Old Testament, which is "no more than a republication of the revelation and institutions originally given to Adam."<sup>19</sup> This has much in common with the view then current of three revelations — that of the creation period, that given to the Jews, and that given in Christ. But Forbes was distinctively Hutchinsonian in arguing that all three were identical, and that this had only been obscured when the

17 Walker, *Skinner*, 159, 161.

18 D. Forbes, *The Works of the Right Hon. Duncan Forbes of Culloden* (London, 1816), 1.

19 *Ibid.*, 86.

Jews added vowel-points to the Hebrew text. In another work, *Letter to a Bishop*, published in 1732, Forbes had argued that the Hebrew language "was the original one, framed in Paradise, and with the particularity that each root is taken from some particular beast, bird, plant, flower, or some other sensible object . . . from whence it is further carried to signify spiritual or mental things . . .".<sup>20</sup>

Having established that revelation was found in the allegorical use of a particular Hebrew text, Forbes went on to assert that the Trinity was proved against Deists and others by Hebrew references to Fire, Light, and Air, for the Three Persons respectively. This created problems. It was well known in their day that Hutchinsonians had a modalist view of the Trinity and rejected the eternal generation of the Son, which caused several generations of Episcopalian clergy to reject the Athanasian Creed, though others accepted it without knowing what they were doing. According to Forbes, they rejected eternal generation because fire continues to generate light, and that within time, and in this they made much of the rays of the sun. Hutchinson opposed Newton in this as in so much else and said that the sun could not wear out, but must be replenished by streams of atoms returning to it; this seems to the modern reader a more Newtonian theory than that of Newton himself, but it was part of Hutchinson's rejection of gravity and of vacuum. All this, of course, was part of the Hutchinsonian objection to Newtonian physics with its extreme certainty and unspiritual utilitarianism. But apart from Fire, Light, and Air, the Hutchinsonians based their teaching on urim and thummin, and on the cherubim seen by Ezekiel. The ox stood for fire or the Father, the lion for light or the Son, the eagle for air or the Spirit, and "the Man, Jesus Christ joined to the Second Person".<sup>21</sup> This sounds Nestorian, and elsewhere Forbes wrote that "the Son, to satisfy eternal justice, took on him flesh, was united to the humanity, suffered for sinners, made atonement for them, raised the Man to whom he was joined from the dead, glorified him with himself, and is to make continual intercession for sinners."<sup>22</sup> Clearly Christ is not the Son but is only joined to the Son, an Adoptionist Christology, if not a Nestorian one.

If Forbes' arguments from the Hebrew are disregarded, more convincing reasons for the group to take this particular view of the Trinity may be found. It was an age of Rationalism, when Unitarianism was a natural consequence of concentration on the creation and on natural religion, and when those whom we now call Moderates had a view of the Trinity in which the Persons

20 *Ibid.*, 289. This section bears the title "Letter to a Bishop", possibly referring to Bishop Sherlock of London.

21 *Ibid.*, 339.

22 *Ibid.*, 125.

were widely separated from one another. Those who reacted against the prevailing climate of opinion could be expected to favour a tight Trinity, in which Father and Son were confused, and in consequence the Son could not be too closely identified with the human Christ. In the early church, this was the position of Antioch, and particularly of the Antiochine bishop Paul of Samosata, and in subsequent times this developed into Nestorianism or something not far from it. It may be supposed that fear of Unitarianism led the Hutchinsonians to this position, and Hebrew allegoricism was used to substantiate it. But if they were all technically heretical on the subject of the Trinity, they do not seem to have been aware of it and none in that age was likely to bring worthy individuals to trial for what was considered mere eccentricity.

One thing curiously absent from the writings of Duncan Forbes was the strongly sacramental theme of Hutchinsonianism. For Hutchinson, the sacraments were the essential means by which Christ dwelt in his church and his sacramental theology is very similar to that of Tractarians such as Robert Wilberforce. But there can be no doubt that the essential element in the Hutchinsonian teaching was revealed religion, as Jones of Nayland admitted, and its opposition to the theology of the day with its reliance on a mechanical universe. Against this the words of Duncan Forbes are the clearest: "If the mechanism could have been understood without the further discovery that this self-moving machine is no more than an inanimate piece of clock-work, created, as well as put together, by the supreme, intelligent, beneficent, Being, it might have led man to place his admiration and worship on the machine, in place of him that made it, as the mistaken part of mankind always did."<sup>23</sup> So Paley was not enough, and the argument from design was not enough, though if the Hutchinsonians were in some sense right in stressing accident rather than design, it may have been more by accident than by design. But modern science with its relativity and quantum physics has in some dim way justified the group in their distrust of the certainties of Newton and his supporters.<sup>24</sup>

If this is Hutchinsonianism, it is now time to consider its history in Scottish Episcopalianism from 1753 until it entered into decline around the end of the century. Of this history little has been written, and what we know of it comes largely from the pen of William Walker, Episcopal clergyman at Monymusk and biographer of bishops, who treated it sympathetically even if he did not share any of its tenets. Other historians of Episcopalianism tended to minimise its importance, perhaps because it did not

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 299.

<sup>24</sup> W. H. Cropper, *The Quantum Physicists* (New York, 1970), 4, 5, 77, 109, 219-220.



seem respectable. And, as Walker made clear, the doctrine was only dominant in the north-eastern heartland of Episcopalianism. In southern Scotland there was another theology, the semi-Pelagianism of Bishop Gleig and some others, which is said to have been a reaction to too much extreme Calvinism.<sup>25</sup> But in the north-east, clergy were trained by Skinner or by Jolly, both stressing the importance of Hebrew, though for different reasons, and Skinner being much the more influential. What he taught his students may be deduced from his *Letters Addressed to Candidates for Holy Orders*,<sup>26</sup> even though the exact use to which he put this particular set of letters is in doubt. Of 38 letters, no less than 11 were concerned with the doctrine of the Eternal Generation of the Son, which was rejected. Eight were concerned with the Trinity, considered on moderate Hutchinsonian principles, two were on Predestination which was opposed, and the rest were divided between other topics. The general tone was irenic and if he praised scripture for its "obscurity", one knows what he meant.<sup>27</sup> In Skinner's work *On the Shechinah, or Divine Presence*, planned in prison, he identified the Shechinah with Christ,<sup>28</sup> though he admitted that Holloway identified it with the Eucharistic elements.<sup>29</sup> And he stated that the Trinity led on to writings on and belief in "Jupiter, Neptune, and Pluto".<sup>30</sup>

Yet despite Neptune and Pluto, Skinner did come to moderate his Hutchinsonianism in old age. His *Ecclesiastical History of Scotland*, published in 1788, is rather cool in its advocacy of the doctrine, though heated in advocating the study of Hebrew.<sup>31</sup> Neither his son nor his grandson, who were successively bishops of Aberdeen, were Hutchinsonian in any real sense though Gleig, just before his death in 1840, described John Skinner of Forfar, another grandson of the original Skinner, as still being a Hutchinsonian.<sup>32</sup> There is no mention of any Episcopalian layman having been a Hutchinsonian, though undoubtedly the laity were moved by the sacramentalist teaching and by reliance on allegory and revelation at a time when most other preaching was on benevolence and on creation. It is claimed that the sermons of the two principal English Hutchinsonian clergy, William Jones of Nayland and Bishop George Horne of Norwich, were much

25 W. Walker, *Life of the Right Reverend George Gleig, LL.D., F.S.S.A., Bishop of Brechin and Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church* (Edinburgh, 1878), 206, 226, 351.

26 Skinner, *Works*, i; Walker, *Skinner*, 181.

27 Skinner, *Works*, i, 433.

28 *Ibid.*, ii, 16.

29 *Ibid.*, ii, 122.

30 *Ibid.*, ii, 87.

31 J. Skinner, *An Ecclesiastical History of Scotland* (London and Edinburgh, 1788), 673-677.

32 Walker, *Gleig*, 387.

quarried by Aberdeenshire Episcopal preachers,<sup>33</sup> though they were probably also used by many English clergy who had hardly heard of the Hutchinsonian doctrines.

One question which arises is that of the connection, if any, between zeal for the Stuart cause and a theological system such as this. It would be natural for a church which rejected a political regime to reject the religious outlook of that regime.<sup>34</sup> But there was probably more to the connection than this. The Jacobites were gradually forced to admit that their cause was hopeless, but remained backward-looking, and the Hutchinsonian teaching came out of the past. Furthermore, it was romantic and convoluted, unlike the crass utilitarianism of the Enlightenment which they associated with the Hanoverians. With the end of Deism and Moderatism, they could abandon Hutchinsinianism, and slowly did so, while maintaining the link with the English Hutchinsonians and forming an alliance with the Church of England for the days ahead.

The last Hutchinsonian in Scotland was said to be the clergyman John Murdoch of Keith who died in 1848, still refusing to use the Athanasian Creed.<sup>35</sup> Even in 1820 it was dying and Dean Sangster complained of an ordinand named Pratt that he had not read the works of a string of English non-jurors or, most horrifying, of Hutchinson himself.<sup>36</sup> Pratt had been trained by Jolly, but in later days young men from the north-east went to Edinburgh for instruction at the learned hands of Bishop Russell, a biblical scholar and former minister of the Kirk, and of Bishop Terrot, a former Cambridge don.<sup>37</sup> The old Episcopalian traditions were quietly set aside. It was a far cry from the spirit of a letter by Bishop MacFarlane at Inverness in 1803, decrying all things new as old men do. "False doctrine, heresy, and schism, are now so powerful. . . . Is it not vexing to meet with Natural Religion, Eternal Generation, and God a Moral Governor, still spoken of as if they had any ground to stand on; a Christian can perceive these pagan tenets render the word of God of none effect. But I must have done."<sup>38</sup> To call eternal generation a pagan tenet was probably rare even by 1803, but it would have been almost impossible 20 years later.

One of the more curious offshoots of Hutchinsonians may be seen in the third edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, published through the 1790s, with Bishop Gleig as editor and

33 Walker, *Jolly*, 173.

34 T. Bowdler, *Memoir of the late John Bowdler, Esq.* (London, 1825), 84.

35 Walker, *Skinner*, 165. Murdoch's copy of Hutchinson's *Abstract* is now in the Mitchell Library, Glasgow.

36 Walker, *Gleig*, 206.

37 W. Walker, *Three Churchmen* (Edinburgh, 1893), 4-7.

38 Episcopal Theological College Archives, Edinburgh (Bishop Jolly's Kist), Item 2324, dated 24 March 1804.



Bishop Walker as his assistant. Gleig objected to the Hutchinsonians for their "intolerance", writing, "They might, undisturbed by me, amuse themselves with their imaginary ethereal agents and their fanciful etymologies, if they would only permit me to say and think that the word of God is sufficient to account for all the phenomena, without the interposition of their fluids."<sup>39</sup> But though the article on "Bible" was thoroughly un-Hutchinsonian, and depended largely on Kennicott, that on "Language" was mildly Hutchinsonian and quoted John Skinner anonymously and at length.<sup>40</sup> Elsewhere a contributor argued that the Council of Nicaea condemned Hutchinsonianism, though Gleig wrote to Skinner apologising for his lapse in allowing this to appear.<sup>41</sup>

It was in 1792 that the repeal of the penal acts allowed the Scottish Episcopalians a legal existence, provided that they accepted the Thirty-Nine Articles, which they rather half-heartedly did at the Synod of Lawrencekirk in 1804. In promoting the repeal bill, they were aided by a number of English churchmen, notably Bishop Horsley of St Asaph's, Bishop Horne of Norwich, William Jones of Nayland, James Allen Park, William Stevens, Dr Berkeley, the Rev. Jonathon Boucher, and Dr Gaskin, with John Bowdler of Eltham perhaps only active in their aid at a later stage. Of these nine men, Horsley was not a Hutchinsonian, Bowdler was not specifically described as such, but the others were. More significantly, it is impossible to name a single surviving English Hutchinsonian who did *not* devote much time and effort to aiding the Scottish Episcopalians. Whether the alliance between the two churches would have been possible without the common Hutchinsonian heritage is a matter of conjecture, but it would certainly have been more difficult, and might have been confined to the Episcopalians of English ordination, omitting the former Jacobites altogether.

Yet the English Hutchinsonians are interesting in that their writings reveal what the Scots, who wrote less, believed. Benjamin Holloway was an Oxfordshire cleric held in high regard by Bishop Horne and others. He had known Dr Woodward from 1723, and by him been introduced to Hutchinson, and his philological writings were most notable for his beliefs about Melchisadek. He argued that "Melchisadek was the Second Person in the Divine Essence, the true King of Righteousness and King of Peace . . . in the Fulness of Time, he took and united the Manhood . . . to himself . . . the Man Jesus Christ (who was to be so taken and united to him the Then — Melchisadek) did, by suffering since, become Priest", and "under the different

<sup>39</sup> Walker, *Gleig*, 315.

<sup>40</sup> *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 3rd edn. (Edinburgh, 1797), iii, 530-531.

<sup>41</sup> Skinner, *Theological Works*, i, clvi-clvii.

Dispensations, before, and after, his Incarnation, he manifested himself, without the Flesh, and in the Flesh, even as Melchisadek, before the days of his Flesh; and lastly (with Respect of the Essence) as Jehovah, in both."<sup>42</sup> Holloway is said to have been refused an Imprimatur for his views on Melchisadek, but the above quotation is in a volume bearing the Imprimatur of the Vice-Chancellor of Oxford University.<sup>43</sup> Perhaps the sheer impenetrability of Holloway's prose was too much for the censor.

The two early figures who arranged for re-publication of Hutchinson's works in 1748 were Spearman and Bate. Julius Bate wrote a tortured English almost as impossible as that of Hutchinson himself and he was a noted Hebrew lexicographer of his day. He held that the Hebrew language "was formed by God himself, who taught Adam to speak, and to speak in this language."<sup>44</sup> He spent much time attacking Bishop Warburton of Gloucester, but his strongest artillery was directed against Benjamin Kennicott who had produced two early dissertations in 1744 on the Hebrew text. Kennicott had studied 70 variants of the Hebrew text and found them all much the same, while the Hutchinsonians claimed that the Jews had corrupted the text, particularly by adding vowel-points. In fact, vowel and accent points were only added sometime after the sixth century, but Kennicott held that even if some of these were not correct, most were, and Hutchinson's practice of changing vowels was thus invalidated. To change some points was not improper, but to do so as Hutchinson did was, in the eyes of many critics, tantamount to preparing an entirely new text to fit his theories.<sup>45</sup>

Robert Spearman was a layman from Durham, who published his work at Edinburgh in 1759. Described in the *Dictionary of National Biography* as an "eccentric theologian" who "amused his leisure with speculations in theology" he is further asserted to have written "additions to the sum of human error".<sup>46</sup> In fact, his writings pleased John Wesley, though they did not convince him, and Spearman wrote clearly and as moderately as could be expected of any man who claimed that all Greek and Latin literature was derived from the Old Testament. The name "Apollo" he traced to a Hebrew word for "light", so it meant "Christ"; and when Apollo subdued the dragon Python, it meant that Christ had conquered Satan, since "Python" came from a Hebrew word, "to deceive".<sup>47</sup> The Labours of Hercules were "nothing but an heiroglyphic description in different views and

42 B. Holloway, *Origins Physical and Theological* (Oxford, 1751), 432, 435.

43 *D.N.B.*, Benjamin Holloway.

44 J. Bate, *The Integrity of the Hebrew Text* (London, 1754), 1.

45 *Ibid.*, 10.

46 *D.N.B.* Robert Spearman.

47 R. Spearman, *Letter to a Friend concerning the Septuagint Translation and the Heathen Mythology* (Edinburgh, 1759), 85.

divers manners of the actions of Jesus of Nazareth",<sup>48</sup> and none would have thought otherwise, "had we not been led away by the notion that natural religion is prior to, and the basis of, revealed, and that the Mosaic dispensation was a motley kind of ceremonial."<sup>49</sup> Hutchinson himself held Homer to be full of Hebrew, though Horne and others of the later period did not go so far, and opposed heathen literature instead of finding Christianity hidden in its depths. John Bowdler wanted classical literature expurgated,<sup>50</sup> much as his brother actually did expurgate the works of Shakespeare.

Samuel Pike wrote a Hutchinsonian book in 1753 and was almost unique in the Hutchinsonian ranks through not being Church of England but a London Congregationalist minister. However, he soon turned into a Glassite. Like Parkhurst and Bate he produced a Hebrew lexicon, though a lesser one.<sup>51</sup>

Of the later group, almost all were associated with events at Oxford in the early 1750s when Jones and Horne were converted by a fellow-student named Catcott, whose father had been an early Hutchinsonian author. They then found an aged don, George Watson, who was another adherent of the teaching and who taught Hebrew to Jones.<sup>52</sup> In later years, both Horne and Jones were known for a sober spirituality, and the sermons of Jones of Nayland used allegory in a more rational way than did the early Hutchinsonians.<sup>53</sup> William Stevens was a London merchant, cousin to Horne, a great manager of religious funds, and a correspondent of John Skinner who, as late as 1800, was trying to get Stevens to have Horne write about Hutchinsonianism.<sup>54</sup> Yet Stevens had never known that there was a Scottish Episcopal church until the consecration of Seabury for America.<sup>55</sup> Jonathon Boucher was a clergyman who had been in America until the Revolution, James Allen Park was a judge who had migrated in his youth from Scotland to London, and John Bowdler (if he really was one of the Hutchinsonians) a country gentleman, a patient of that Dr Randolph of Bath who was himself a Hutchinsonian and a friend of Stevens.<sup>56</sup> Bowdler's son attributed the father's concern for Scottish Episcopalians to his

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>50</sup> Bowdler, *Memoir*, 192-3.

<sup>51</sup> J. Bate, *Critica Hebraea, or, A Hebrew English Dictionary without Points* (London, 1767); J. Parkhurst, *An Hebrew and English Lexicon* (London, 1762); S. Pike, *A Compendious Hebrew Lexicon* (London, 1766).

<sup>52</sup> *The Miscellaneous Works of the Right Rev. George Horne, D.D.* ed. W. Jones (London, 1830), iv, xxxiii; W. H. Teale, *Lives of the English Divines* (London, 1846), 348.

<sup>53</sup> W. Jones, *Sermons on Various Subjects and Occasions* (London, 1830).

<sup>54</sup> J. A. Park, *Memoir of William Stevens, Esq.* (London, 1814), 158-159.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

<sup>56</sup> Bowdler, *Memoir*, 26.



friendship with Robert Gordon, a non-juring bishop who died in 1799, but the sons of Hutchinsonians tended to minimise their fathers' involvement with the group. This was hardly surprising; the animadversions of Sir Leslie Stephen both in the *Dictionary of National Biography* and elsewhere<sup>57</sup> were far from unique in Victorian days, though in Stephen's case it arose partly through suspicion of contemporary high churchmen leading him to denigrate their predecessors. This may have worked both ways; when Thomas Arnold of Rugby wrote against the Tractarians as "the formalist Judaising fanatics . . . who have ever been the disgrace of the Church of England", he may just have had in mind some memory of the Hutchinsonians.<sup>58</sup>

In conclusion, Hutchinsonianism was a belief which inspired certain English churchmen and a few Scots gentry and much of a minor Scottish church to a sober faith based on revelation, in opposition to the majority tendencies of their day. Its very rejection of the spirit of the age meant that it could never grow beyond a certain point, but a minority group such as the Aberdeenshire Episcopalians could find in it something to justify their existence and perhaps to ensure their survival. But the Episcopalians were not the only ones to opt out from the spirit of the age and natural religion. The following words might have come from a Hutchinsonian work, "Now the Law is a doctrine partly known by nature. . . . But the Gospel is a doctrine revealed from Heaven by the Son of God, presently after the Fall of Mankind unto Sin and Death, and afterwards manifested more clearly and fully to the Patriarchs and Prophets, to the Evangelists and Apostles, and by them spread abroad. . .".<sup>59</sup> These words come from another English product which came to life in eighteenth-century Scotland, *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*. Then there is Methodism, for the success of which neither social scientist nor church historian has ever been able to offer a convincing explanation, but in which revelation was certainly a factor. John Wesley read everything he could about Hutchinsonianism, but of course he read everything he could about everything. His final judgment was that Hutchinson "had not the least conception, much less experience, of inward religion", that anyone could prove what he liked from a Hebrew "without vowels", and that the whole system was "unsupported by any solid proof."<sup>60</sup> We may wish to give Hutchinson the benefit of the doubt about inward religion, but on the other

57 L. Stephen, *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1876), 389-392.

58 T. Arnold, "The Oxford Malignants and Dr Hampden", *Edinburgh Review*, vol. 63. (April 1836), 235.

59 E.F., *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* (London, 1718), 264.

60 J. Wesley, *Journals* (London, 1909-1916), v, 353.

points Wesley was surely right. Nonetheless, Hutchinsonianism was a faith based on a nonsense which served to promote inward religion and quiet goodness.

